

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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S E C R E T BRUSSELS 6178

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

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SUB: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ON MIDDLE EAST

REF: USNATO 5191

1. SUMMARY: ON OCTOBER 30 I REVIEWED WITH FONMIN VAN
ELSLANDE THE US POSITION ON US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS AS AFFECTED

BY THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS. WE AGREED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CLOSE
CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES. HE EX-
PRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRESSURES WHICH REQUIRED
RAPID ACTION IN THE ALERT OF US FORCES. BELGIUM IS ONE OF THOSE
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHICH IS PREPARED TO SUPPORT
US POSITIONS IF WE PROVIDE PERSUASIVE EXPLANATIONS
OF OUR ACTIONS. I FULLY ENDORSE AMBASSADOR
RUMSFELD'S ASSESSMENT IN THIS REGARD (REFTEL).
END SUMMARY.

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2. I BEGAN MY CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE OCTOBER
30 BY TELLING HIM THAT PRESIDENT NIXON STILL INTENDS TO
VISIT EUROPE AND THAT AN APPROPRIATE TIME WOULD BE WORKED OUT ON
THE BASIS OF PROGRESS IN US-EUROPEAN CONSULTATIONS. I NOTED

THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE IN BASIC US POLICY TOWARD EUROPE.

3. TURNING TO THE MIDDLE EAST, I REVIEWED RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND INFORMED THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE DISPATCH OF US NAVAL VESSELS TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AND OF THE PRESENT STATE OF ALERT OF US FORCES IN EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN. AS I HAD DONE WITH VICE PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS ON THE PREVIOUS DAY (BRUSSELS 6177), I REVIEWED THE US POSITION ON US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS AS THEY ARE AFFECTED BY EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. I NOTED OUR DESIRE FOR EUROPEAN UNDERSTANDING OF OUR POLICY, THE DANGER OF RADICALIZATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THE EFFECTS ON WESTERN INTERESTS IF THE SOVIETS WERE ALLOWED TO PURSUE AGGRESSIVE POLICIES. I POINT OUT, IN ADDITION, THE FALLACY THAT EUROPE COULD ENSURE ITS OIL SUPPLY BY DISSOCIATING ITSELF FROM THE US AND CAPITULATING TO THE ARABS. I PARTICULARLY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE THE US ATTACHES TO CONSULTATIONS WITH ITS ALLIES AND OUR INTENTIONS TO ENSURE THAT THOSE CONSULTATIONS BECOME MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND TAKE PLACE MORE QUICKLY.

4. VAN ELSLANDE EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR MY REMARKS. HE, TOO, UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES; BUT HE ADDED THAT HE NOW MORE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE PRESSURES UNDER WHICH THE USG HAD HAD TO MAKE ITS DECISION ON THE ALERT OF FORCES. IN ANY CASE, WHATEVER OBJECTIONS THE EUROPEANS HAD RAISED ABOUT CONSULTATIONS WITH THE US, HE SAID, THOSE OBJECTIONS NEED NOT PREJUDICE FUTURE RELATIONS.

5. VAN ELSLANDE THEN ASKED FOR US UNDERSTANDING OF THE BELGIAN POSITION. HE SAID THAT AFTER THE MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY KISSINGER AND GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV, THE SENSIBLE POSITION FOR BELGIUM WAS NEUTRALITY (I.E., NOT TO TAKE SIDES BETWEEN THE ARABS AND ISRAELIS). ALTHOUGH THE GOB HAD DECIDED TO SUSPEND ARMS SHIPMENTS AS PART OF THAT POLICY, THE DECISION WAS NOT INTENDED TO AFFECT THE US RIGHT TO SHIP ITS OWN ARMS OUT OF BELGIUM. THE ADVANTAGE OF BELGIAN NEUTRALITY
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WAS THAT IT MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR BELGIUM TO LEND ITS GOOD OFFICES TO BOTH SIDES IN THE FUTURE. IN PURSUANCE OF THIS OBJECTIVE BELGIUM HAD OFFERED FORCES FOR PARTICIPATION IN UNEF. VAN ELSLANDE SAID THAT, DURING HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH VISITING ITALIAN PRESIDENT LEONE, IT HAD BEEN DECIDED THAT BELGIUM AND ITALY WOULD OFFER TO DEPLOY FORCES IN UNEF BY MEANS OF A COMBINED BELGIAN-ITALIAN FORCE OF APPROXIMATELY 600 MEN. HE NOTED THAT THE DANES STILL WERE NOT INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN UNEF AND IN THEIR DECISION TO ABSTAIN, WERE INFLUENCED PRIMARILY BY THEIR FELLOW SCANDINAVIANS RATHER THAN THEIR EC PARTNERS. THE CONVERSATIONS ENDED ON A NOTE OF APPRECIATION FOR MY REVIEW OF US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

6. COMMENT: THE EMPHASIS IN VAN ELSLANDE'S BRIEF REMARKS WAS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE US AND EUROPE AND OF LOOKING TO THE FUTURE. I BELIEVE THAT I SUCCEEDED IN SMOOTHING THE GOB'S RUFFLED FEATHERS (BRUSSELS 6137), WHILE FORCEFULLY RESTATING THE US POSITION. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT BELGIUM FALLS IN THE CATEGORY OF THOSE "INSECURE BUT FRIENDLY ALLIED GOVERNMENTS" WHICH ARE CONFRONTED BY POLITICAL REALITIES THAT CALL FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING (REFTEL). IF WE SUPPLY THOSE ALLIES WITH PERSUASIVE EXPLANATIONS OF US DECISIONS OF VITAL CONCERN TO THEM, THEY WILL BE READY TO SUPPORT OUR FUTURE ACTIONS. ALTHOUGH EUROPEAN PRESSURES HAVE BEEN MORE ACUTE IN NATO, WHERE WE HAVE CENTERED OUR CONSULTATIONS REGARDING THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, WE HAVE NOTED IN OUR BILATERAL CONTACTS AN UNEASINESS IN REACTING TO OUR REQUESTS TO SUPPORT THE US POSITION WITHOUT FULLER INFORMATION ON STEPS WE ARE TAKING. I UNRESERVEDLY AGREE WITH AMBASSADOR RUMSFELD'S ASSESSMENT OF THE FEELING AMONG OUR ALLIES RESULTING FROM THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS AND OF THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVED CONSULTATIONS (REFTEL).STRAUSZ-HUPE

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